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REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

OF

PUBLIC EDUCATION,

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA.

JANUARY 28, 1867.

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ment professor of the Girard College of Orphans, "the great feature of the Prussian system of schools is the provision therein made for the education of common school teachers. It is the only means of putting public education in a steady and consequent train of improvement. It will raise the employment of teaching to a regular profession, and introduce generally consistent and rational methods of instructing. It will create among teachers devotion to their office, and a desire for co-operation. This desire will manifest itself in the organization of unions for conference, and in the establishment and support of many periodicals. The higher character of teachers, and the improved State of the schools, will bring them respect and a better remuneration for their services. The higher value set upon education, the immense contrast between the efficiency of a constant and that of a half yearly school, and the impossibility of getting good teachers for the latter, will gradually do away with this great evil under which our school system suffers." * * * "The science of the human mind and its cultivation—this vitally important branch of a nation's literature—will be developed among us, and its blessings will be richly manifested in the better cultivation of all the sciences and arts of life."

In its legislation for the training of fifty-two young men for the teacher's vocation, under the able faculty of the State Seminary of Learning, the General Assembly has recognized the importance of the object to which its attention is now invited. This office is gratified to learn, from a statement furnished by the Superintendent of that institution, that thirty-five parishes are now represented therein, and most of them by cadets who will hereafter prove efficient members of the teaching corps, and it would be pleased to see the number quadrupled by the State; but it must be manifest that, owing to the low standard of scholarship prescribed for the admission of such cadets—and this unavoidably, in consequence of the limited facilities offered in the parishes for the elementary education of the candidates—but one competent teacher quinquennially can be furnished from the Seminary to each parish, making the benefit partial and limited in its operation. Nor is it less noticeable that the Seminary can afford no facilities whatever to pupils of that sex whose services are equally necessary in the management of parochial schools, and more generally useful and reliable in schools of an inferior or primary grade. In furtherance, therefore, of the sagacious design of the General Assembly, it is respectfully suggested that, to aid in the training of teachers of both sexes, for the parochial schools, a central academy be established in each parish, with a normal department therein, to which shall be admitted, free of charge, such young persons, over sixteen years of age, as desire to be prepared or improved for the exercise of the teacher's vocation. To excite proper emulation among the male pupils in such an academy, it would also be judicious to require that the most proficient among them, at the close of a two years' course, be selected as the representatives of the parish in the State Seminary.

It is not proposed that such academy be exclusively a Normal School, but that it also offer gratuitous education to all indigent children of the parish, over fourteen years of age, that can attend it. Maintained by the amount of poll tax collected in the parish, and in part by local contributions, the Superintendent is satisfied that such an institution could soon be rendered an effective educational agent.

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AT NEW ORLEANS.

This institution, established in 1858, under the direction of the School Board of the First Municipal District, has trained a large number of

teachers for the primary and intermediate schools of this city, and furnished useful aids, also, to several private schools in the country. The change in its organization during the war, and its suspension for want of State aid during the last eighteen months, have materially enhanced the difficulty of supplying the city schools with a corps of competent professional teachers. Its revival under the auspices of the City School Board is now, therefore, desirable. That this may be effected without expense to the State, it is respectfully recommended that the property purchased in the name of the State, in 1859, for the site of the proposed school building—the debt on which the City Council has recently wholly discharged—be donated to the city of New Orleans, on the condition that it shall reorganize and maintain the school in suitable apartments for the ensuing four years, and make provision for the free tuition and exercise therein of not less than one scholar, over sixteen years of age, from each parish, seeking its privileges with the view of adopting the teacher's vocation.

COLLEGES FOR THE PROMOTION OF AGRICULTURE AND THE MECHANIC ARTS.

An act of the United States Congress, approved July 2, 1862, conditionally donates to each State a quantity of public land, equal to 30,000 acres for each Senator and Representative in Congress, to which such State is entitled by the apportionment under the census of 1860, or land scrip, to make up any deficiency arising from an insufficiency of public lands in the State; and directs that the proceeds thereof shall be invested in stocks of the United States, or of the States, or some other safe stocks, yielding not less than five per centum upon the par value of said stocks, and shall thus constitute a perpetual fund for the endowment and support of at least one college, where the leading object shall be to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.

The object thus sought to be promoted being one of primary importance to the future prosperity of the State, and the period prescribed for the acceptance of the grant being about to expire, (July, 1867); and a proposition now pending in the Congress to extend the provisions of the act to States heretofore debarred therefrom, a careful consideration of those provisions is respectfully suggested, and such action invoked as will at least testify Louisiana's willingness to further the practical education of the industrial classes of her population. It may reasonably be claimed by the General Assembly that the State long since anticipated the "leading object" of the Congress, by the erection, organization and endowment of her State Seminary of Learning, near Alexandria, and by her creation of a Department of Natural Sciences in the University of Louisiana; and that even now, under the auspices of the former institution, all the beneficent provisions of the act may be faithfully carried out! It is obvious, however, that, in the present impoverishment of her resources, she needs substantial aid for the full accomplishment of her educational mission; and if she can be permitted to claim the benefits of the act in question, she may judiciously establish, in each Congressional District, agricultural schools, with model farms and mechanical workshops, for the benefit of all her industrial classes; and thus, too, may many of her own experienced agriculturists and mechanics undertake to train the now wandering children of freedmen in such habits of industry and intelligent, systematic labor, as will fit them for a proper performance hereafter of the duties incumbent on all members of society.

The suggestions embodied briefly in the preceding pages and in the an-

nexed circulars, are intended solely to promote the adoption of some effectual plan by which a shattered educational system may gradually be restored to its integrity, and to the order and harmony contemplated by its original founders. It is earnestly trusted that they may not be deemed entirely unsuited to the important interests which they are intended to subserve in the present and to guarantee for the future.

Upon the General Assembly of the State now rests the responsibility of meeting the question with the prescience of an intelligent and a patriotic statesmanship. No sadder comment upon legislation can exist than a blighted national intellect. It paralyzes every interest connected with the glory and prosperity of a commonwealth. It saps alike the foundations of public spirit and of private virtue. It clings like a shirt of Nessus to the body politic of a free people, and its poison festers until the strong frame grows impotent and grovels in the dust.

Modern civilization is based on the education of the masses. Prussia, Austria, and all the German States, France, Switzerland, Great Britain, and most of the minor kingdoms of Europe, have long since recognized this important truth, by their liberal provisions for the free education of their people; and even Russia, in the far East, now struggles with her Cossack hordes, and for the first time in her history as an empire spells out the primer of popular education. In the sympathetic march-step of civilization now resounding through Canada and most of the American States, we of Louisiana should not fall back to the rear line. We are Americans, and must therefore be progressive; we are of the South, and therefore eminently conservative. Though the late conflict has left us broken and impoverished, surely that does not divest our war-scarred people and indigent children of their sacred claims, our statesmen of their solemn responsibility, the Commonwealth of its potential authority in all matters affecting the public welfare.

The war has increased the number of neglected children; the State must, if possible, double her love and tenderness towards them. It has left them in the toils of poverty; the State alone can free them from the still more fatal bonds of ignorance. It has left them poor in lands and revenues; to the State must they look to be made rich in such instruction as will strengthen the mind and purify the heart—as will make true patriots of her sons, and intelligent, noble women of her daughters.

If there be one deduction, more strongly marked than any other, to be drawn from our changed political condition, it is that hereafter Louisiana must be peopled by *educated citizens*. The children of these days will find themselves compelled to struggle with greater and more subtle difficulties than have ever fallen upon us. By the system of public education alone can the great majority of them be prepared for the conflict. If that system pass through the ordeal to which it is now subjected, we may hope that its usefulness will be permanent. But if, through any lukewarmness on the part of its protectors, it be allowed to fall, its framework—now trembling in the balance—will be shattered, and the hopes of a struggling generation indefinitely postponed. If the protecting shield of the Commonwealth be withdrawn from it, and a great public institution be thus sacrificed to a specious plea of expediency, we shall turn back the shadow on the dial of Alaz, and lay ourselves open to the success of our adversaries; we shall read the problem of civilization in reverse—

“Spelling it backward like a Hebrew book,”

and give over to ignorance and its attendant evils those tender children of the State, upon whom will depend, in coming years, the unsullied dignity of her record, and the untarnished glory of her fame.

Respectfully submitted,

ROBT. M. LUSHIER, *State Superintendent.*